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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRUSSELS 001875

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL/FO, INL/PC, INL/AAE, EUR/ERA, L/LEI;
JUSTICE FOR CRIMINAL DIVISION, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS;
LA PAZ FOR DCM, NAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2016
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [EUN](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: INL ASSISTANT SECRETARY DISCUSSES THREATENED
EXPULSION OF DEA FROM BOLIVIA WITH COMMISSION DEPUTY
DIRECTOR-GENERAL AGUIAR

Classified By: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
AFFAIRS (INL) COUNSELOR JAMES P. MCANULTY FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) INL Assistant Secretary David Johnson briefed European Commission Deputy Director-General (DDG) for Relations with Asia and Latin America Joao Aguiar Machado and Commission Bolivia Desk Officer Nicola Murray on the threat by Bolivian President Evo Morales to expel Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) personnel. Commission interlocutors expressed concern over the situation, but professed lack of leverage to convince Bolivian leaders to rescind the order, because of existing friction over regional trade negotiations. END SUMMARY.

REVIEW OF COUNTER-DRUG SITUATION IN BOLIVIA

¶2. (C) After the November 14 U.S.-European Union (EU) Troika meeting on Drug Issues (Septel), INL Assistant Secretary (A/S) Johnson, accompanied by Mission INL Counselor, INL/PC Deputy Director, and INL/PC Foreign Affairs Officer, briefed DDG Aguiar and Desk Officer Murray regarding the latest drug developments in Bolivia, particularly the threatened expulsion of DEA personnel. A/S Johnson noted that the U.S. counter-drug program in Bolivia has traditionally focused on interdiction, alternative development, and eradication. The current budget for the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) budget there amounted to some 30 million dollars annually. In early summer, the Bolivian coca growers' union had protested against the activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), forcing AID personnel to leave the Chapare region. On November 1, President Evo Morales suddenly declared a 90-day deadline for the departure of all DEA personnel from the country. Absent a reversal of this decision, DEA personnel would leave Bolivia by the end of January 2009, after a presence of more than 30 years there.

LOSS OF COUNTER-DRUG CAPABILITIES

13. (C) A/S Johnson noted that, with the projected departure of DEA personnel, the U.S. and Bolivia would lose a targeting mechanism for effective counter-drug activities. He lamented that such a decision, if carried out, would end what had become the longest-running, and at one point the largest, U.S. counter-drug program in the Western Hemisphere. Under such a scenario, the U.S. would remove all U.S.-supplied helicopters but would leave behind other capital equipment, including vehicles and computer systems. The sustainability of such equipment would remain doubtful, however, given the poor GOB record on maintenance. INL would transfer remaining funds to other programs, perhaps to those in neighboring countries, such as Peru, Paraguay, or Brazil. If the INL Bureau were asked to end its NAS program in Bolivia, the process of restarting it would take years with the required lead time for programming and budgeting processes. A/S Johnson warned that, given the flow of Bolivian cocaine to markets in Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and nations in West Africa and Europe, the greatest impact of DEA's departure would be on those countries, rather than the United States. Cocaine flows to Europe would likely increase "significantly," producing unfortunate consequences.

EU KEENLY CONCERNED ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

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14. (C) DDG Aguiar responded that the situation in Bolivia worried him and other EU officials. He said they were "on the same page" as U.S. colleagues regarding Bolivia. He offered that the Commission would try to deal with Bolivia on this issue, but currently found themselves in a "delicate situation," because of recent friction over negotiation of an Andean free trade agreement. The Commission had tried to negotiate multilaterally, but Bolivia blocked a regional agreement. Negotiators are planning to negotiate bilaterally -- a change in strategy that has angered President Morales. Aguiar remarked that Morales, who was putting himself in the role of "victim," has now begun to lash out at the EU. Earlier, the EU had tried to help President Morales resolve domestic issues involving the Constitution and the provinces.

REGIONAL IMPACT

15. (C) A/S Johnson acknowledged that Morales may no longer be open to reversing his decision. Accordingly, the U.S. was examining relationships in neighboring countries that would be affected by the expulsion of DEA personnel. Overall, the U.S. enjoys good relations with Brazil, and DEA maintains a strong presence there. That said, in recent years, Brazil had been slow in expending some of its INL assistance, particularly related to rule of law reforms. The Brazilians may have perceived such assistance as evoking a "student-teacher relationship" and had allowed 15 million dollars to go unexpended over four to five years. As a result, INL had to move some of the funding to programs in other countries. Yet, overall U.S.-Brazilian relations remain positive, particularly on energy and trade. Aguiar observed that Brazil appeared interested in starting a dialogue on drug issues with the EU and had proposed a meeting in December. Previously, Brazil had viewed this area as too sensitive to address.

16. (C) DDG Aguiar inquired whether the worsening U.S.-Bolivian relationship would continue to escalate, especially in the wake of the expulsion of the U.S. Ambassador and the U.S. announcement of planned suspension of trade preferences. A/S Johnson responded that the

Administration had announced its decision on trade preferences and awaited public comment. A key Congressional leader had voiced opposition to the decision but, in the end, implementation may be inevitable. Aguiar remarked that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez had pledged to buy up all Bolivian products that would have entered the U.S. under the trade preferences. He expressed concern about "pushing" Morales further into Chavez' corner. That said, he noted that Chavez had a history of making commitments and then breaking them.

EU ASSISTANCE

17. (C) Desk Officer Nicola Murray noted that current EU assistance to Bolivia would not compensate for missing U.S. assistance. EU assistance, focusing primarily on economic development, amounted to some 234 million euros over a seven-year period in three sectors. Of this amount, 45 million euros went to counter-drug assistance over a four-year time frame. A/S Johnson reiterated U.S. concerns over public statements by Bolivian leaders that the EU supported Bolivian efforts to expand commercial uses for coca leaf. DDG Aguiar responded that the EU had proceeded with the initiative to fund the study on coca leaf with the collaboration and knowledge of U.S. officials. He insisted that the study was designed strictly to present a "snap shot" of current legitimate uses of coca leaf. A/S Johnson urged the EU to correct the record when Bolivian officials make their outrageous claims, given that failure to do so would

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lead to an inaccurate public perception. DDG Aguiar insisted that there should be no question over the true purpose of the study. He promised to correct the record, if necessary, to counter inaccurate public perceptions, but implied that the EU would exercise caution in doing so to avoid risking the loss of their ability to communicate with Bolivian leaders.

18. (C) Aguiar added that individual EU Member States had also encountered difficulties in dealing with President Morales, particularly Spain over Bolivia's nationalization of energy companies. Although he claimed that the EU would not be reluctant to express its concerns over the threatened expulsion of DEA personnel, he said he was not optimistic that Bolivia would listen. President Morales, he remarked, continued to present himself as the "excluded" party and "victim." Domestically, he appeared intent on promoting a divisive campaign of "indigenous" Bolivians against "white" Bolivians. Decrying historic injustices, President Morales was understood to be saying that it was now the turn of the indigenous population to rule the country. A/S Johnson agreed generally with DDG Aguiar's analysis. President Morales did not seem to have a coherent vision of the country's future, but only appeared to want benefits that he could announce under an "Evo Delivers" system. He excluded the Peace Corps and AID programs because they did not fit into this framework. Indeed, AID successes in promoting farmers' cooperatives in the Chapare had given the indigenous population there an alternative to supporting his coca growers' unions.

FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION

19. (C) In a follow up conversation with INL Counselor on November 17, Desk Officer Murray lamented published statements by President Morales that DEA agents would not return to Bolivia while he remained in office. She indicated, nonetheless, that Commission and Delegation colleagues were busy exploring strategies and opportunities for speaking with GOB counterparts about the expulsion. INL Counselor impressed upon Murray the urgency of the situation.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Given current EU-Bolivian tensions, Mission holds little hope that Commission colleagues will succeed in persuading Bolivian counterparts to intercede with President Morales to reverse the expulsion decision. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) The INL Bureau has cleared on this telegram.

MURRAY

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